



U.S. Department of Justice

*United States Attorney
Eastern District of Wisconsin*

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NEWS SUMMARY

March 3, 2010

Former Burlington, WI, Man Facing Lengthy Federal Prison Sentence After Jury Conviction for Attempting to Entice a Minor and Possessing Child Pornography.

United States Attorney James L. Santelle announced that Randall J. Knope, (age: 34) formerly of Burlington, was convicted yesterday afternoon following a seven-day jury trial for attempted enticement of a minor to engage in sexual activity and possession of child pornography. He faces a mandatory sentence of at least 10 years in federal prison on the enticement charge, and a maximum of 10 years in prison on the child pornography charge. 18 U.S.C. §§ 2422, 2254. Sentencing is set for July 22, 2010, before the Hon. Charles N. Clevert, Chief United States District Judge.

Knope was originally arrested on June 28, 2008, after he arrived at a location on the south side of Milwaukee for the purpose of meeting a 15 year old girl for sex, with whom he previously had chatted on-line. Subsequent to his arrest, Knope appeared in federal court in the Eastern District of Wisconsin and was ordered detained in federal custody.

At trial, the evidence showed that on June 28, 2008, the Milwaukee Police Department's (MPD) High Technology Unit set up a sting operation to catch child predators operating on-line. An MPD Detective entered a Wisconsin Romance chatroom hosted by Yahoo.com and waited for someone to initiate a conversation with her. Knope initiated a conversation with her by asking her in very graphic terms if she was interested in engaging in a sexual act which involved the use of a sex aid. The detective, in her undercover role, identified herself to Knope as a 15 year old girl who resided in Milwaukee. The two continued to instant message one another and Knope repeatedly discussed sexual acts that he was interested in engaging with her. Knope eventually made plans to meet her later that afternoon at a location on the south side of Milwaukee. When Knope arrived, he entered the store and came out several minutes later with a package of condoms. Knope was then placed under arrest by detectives from the Milwaukee Police Department.

Detectives from the Milwaukee Police Department and officers from the City of Burlington Police Department searched the Burlington residence where Knope had been residing. Knope's two computers were seized and a forensic examination conducted by MPD Detective Richard McQuown revealed videos and still images of child pornography. Detective McQuown also recovered numerous other on-line chats that Knope had engaged in with individuals representing themselves

to be minors. All of the on-line chats were extremely sexual in nature and Knope repeatedly attempted to make arrangements to meet with the minors.

This case was prosecuted in federal court as part of “Project Safe Childhood,” the Department of Justice’s nationwide initiative to combat the growing epidemic of child sexual exploitation and abuse. Led by United States Attorneys’ Offices and the Criminal Division’s Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section (CEOS), Project Safe Childhood marshals federal, state, and local resources to better locate, apprehend, and prosecute individuals who exploit children using the internet, as well as to identify and rescue victims. For more information about Project Safe Childhood, please visit www.projectsafechildhood.gov.

According to United States Attorney James L. Santelle, “the protection of our nation’s children is a top priority of the Department of Justice, and prosecutions such as this further this priority.” Santelle also praised the work of the Milwaukee Police Department’s High Technology Unit.

The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Penelope L. Coblentz and Jonathan H. Koenig.

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